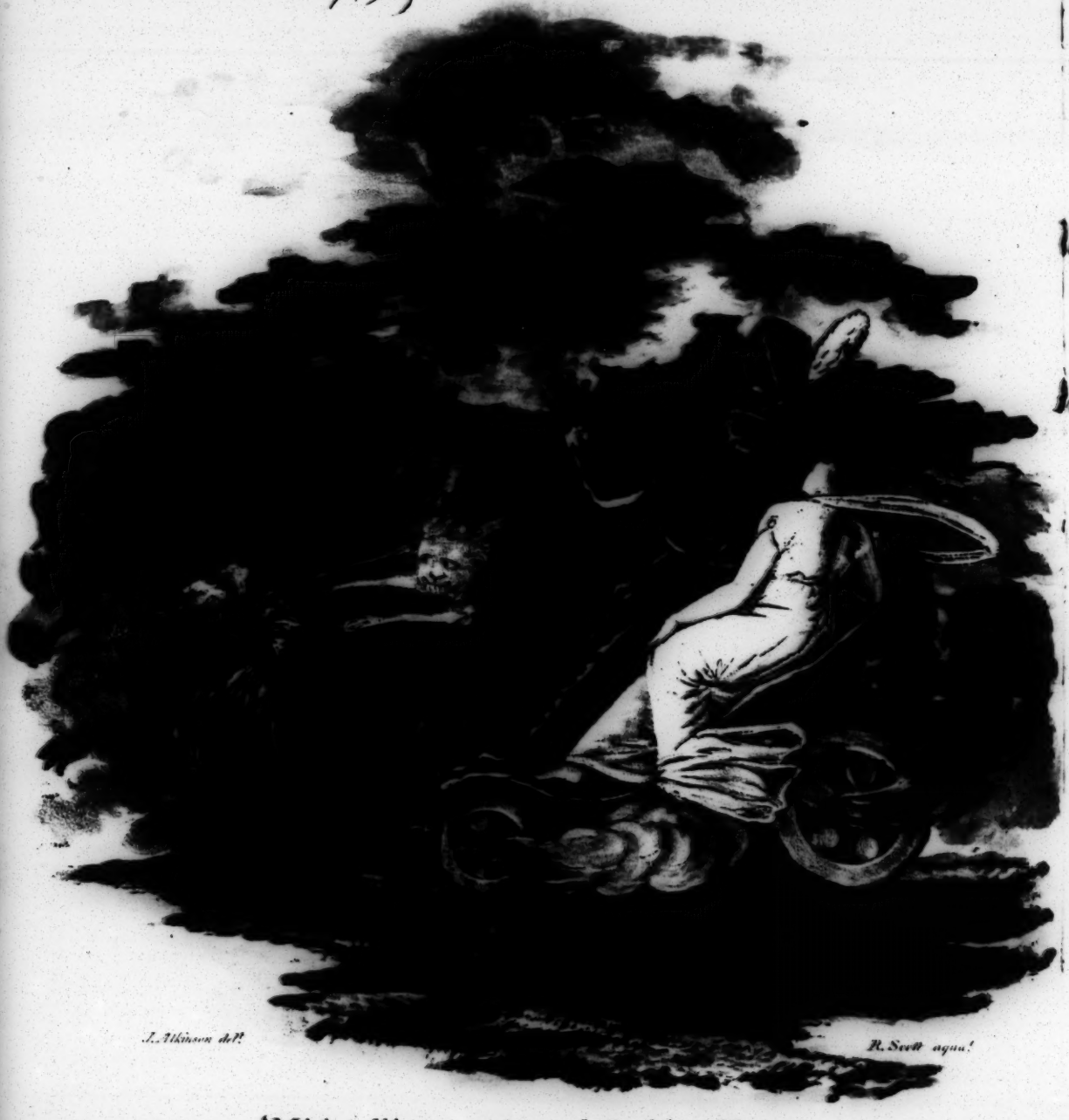
THE HUSSAR OF MAGDEBURG

translated FROM THE German

by P. Donovan



'Mid rolling smoke and flashing Flame
The awful Phæton flew.

THE

HUSSAR

OF

MAGDEBURG;

OR, THE

MIDNIGHT PHÆTON.

A Ballad,

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN,

OF

GOTTERFRIED AUGUSTUS BURGER;

AUTHOR OF *LENORA*, &c.

By J. F. DENOVAN.

Speraate nivere cavete felice..—Hor.

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THE

HUSSAR OF MAGDEBURG;

OR, THE

MIDNIGHT PHLETON, &c.

THRICE blew the brazen trumpets loud
To break the Soldier's sleep,
'Ere clouds had sunder'd—'fore the sun,
—'Ere morn began to peep.

With beating heart, from off her couch,
The lovely Charlotte sprung;
Oh! sure my Albert's gone, she cried,
Her lilly hands she wrung.

"Th' appointed hour is rung and past,
"Whilst I lay drown'd in sleep,
"What ills befall thee Albert, thus
"Thy promise not to keep?"

Impatient Cupid—ruthless God,
How canst thou so design,
Dost see the moon light gild the grove,
The glimm'ring stars yet shine?

Ting went the bell--with tramp and ring,
Appear'd the brave HUSSAR;
With weighty boot, and nodding plume,
—Appendages of war.

He press'd her to his manly breast,
While in his large black eye,
The big tear trembled,—whilst his heart
Bespoke the parting sigh.

Forth from his breast a ring he took,
With diamonds fine that shone,
" Accept this token of my love,
" Preserve it when I'm gone.

" For twelve long months—I ask no more,
" Thou shalt not wedded be,
" Deny me not,—when that expires,
" Thy heart and hand be free.

" Bethink thee well my Charlotte dear,
" 'Ere thou this vow shall break,
"—Nor ſacrifice thy future peace,
" Thou canst not heav'n escape!

" For here I must not linger long,
" Great Frederick mounts his steed;—
" Dost hear the rattling drums my love?
"—To battle on we speed!"

With heav'nly mein she cross'd herself,
Her firm intent to show,
And call'd on every holy saint
To witness this her vow:—

" A thousand suns may blaze unſeen,
"—The stars forget to shine,—
" The mighty globe may cease to move,
" But Charlotte shall be thine.

" Be thine I shall, record juſt heav'ns!
"—What thought shall intervene,—
" Betwixt my Albert's heart and mine,
" Death only comes between!"

With sobbs and tears, with sighs and looks,
That might ensnare the best;
And practis'd all those arts, of which
The fair ones are possest.

He press'd her hand unto his lips,
And kiss'd her lovely cheek;
Unskill'd in flatt'ry's guilful arts,
His heart could only speak.

She followed him with tearful eye,
Along the lenth'ning way;
Until the white plume on his cap,
Did nod and nod away.

Hence forward to Silesia's plains,
With trump and drum they go,
To fight the battles of their king,
And curb the haughty foe.

Hence—where the bristl'd monster war,
Did snorting rage and burn,
Whence many a gallant Prussian youth
Did never more return.

For many a weary day and night
Wherever that she went;
Her thoughts were on her Soldier still
Upon her Albert bent.

All-pow'rful gold—thou loadstone rais'd,
In hell,—all hearts that wins;
The sorest thrall of hapless man,
That punishes his sins!

Th' unrivall'd beauty of the maid,
Fill'd ev'ry heart with love;
Her form was as an Angel sweet,
That waits on God above.

Her eyes like stars—her raven hair,
In shining ringlets waves;
Her cheek was like the apricot,
When shaded by the leaves.

Among the croud of those that came,
To seek the damsel's love;
A wealthy Lord of sounding fame,
At last did happy prove.

Who long with inward pain of heart,
Beheld the beauteous maid,
Save that his rank and dignity,
His passion only staid.

The poignant stings of love no more
Determin'd to endure;
And 'gainst decorums polish'd rules,
To make his comfort sure.

And forth into his chariot fine,
With four white steeds he drives;
And thund'ring from the city out,
At Charlotte's cot arrives.

The damsel saw the chariot come,
With wonder and amaze;
All burnish'd with the setting sun,
It's glassy windows blaze.

Her grey hair'd mother op'd the door,
And let the Baron in,
" Sure has my Lord mistook his way,
" Our cot he seeks I ween ?"

No * mother, there is no mistake,
" Thy cot I sought to find;
For sorely tortur'd is my heart,
" And troubled is my mind."

All-gracious God protect my Lord!
" From him thy comfort seek;
No holy priest inhabits here,
" That comfort may bespeak."

No holy priest I crave to see,
" My only comfort's here,
Without which even life itself,
" A burden is to bear.

" Yet not less sacred is the source,
" Of what I now demand:
" Impell'd by faithful love I seek
" Thy beauteous daughter's hand.

* The words *Father and Mutter*, are familiar Phrases used in Germany in addressing people advanced in years, expressive of their veneration for old age.

" Unlawful love, Lord Fossberg's heir.
" Has ever scorn'd to name;—
" To be his truly wedded wife,
" Thy daughter doth he claim."

" My daughter—sure my noble * Lord,
" Thou art of high degree;
—" And wed a low born peasant maid,
" Sure that may never be."

" O what is titled dignity,—
" And what is high degree;
" The truly happy virtuous heart,
" What title like to thee?

" No mother, these are empty shows
" That may attract the eye,
" But under all their glitt'ring pomp,
" Full many a heart does sigh.

* The Translator is well aware, that the word here in the original, is *Freyhetr*, which signifies a Baron, or independant Gentleman; he has adopted the word "Lord," merely for the sake of the rhyme.

" The supercilious rules of rank,
" With pleasure I resign;—
" Ah! what is letter'd reason's pow'r,
" When love and nature join?

" To rugged hearts that cannot feel,
" Proud reason may belong;
" But nature will be nature still,
" Her various works among.

" Long have I strove the flame to quench,
" But fruitless is the task;
" Then ease the tortures of my soul,
" And grant the sum I ask?"

" To urge thy suit my noble Lord,
" My aid thou shalt not want:—
" The inclinations of my child,
" Were never mine to grant.

" Thrice dear to me my daughter is,—
—" Let her consent be sought;
" For force shall ne'er constrain my child,
" Ah! heav'n forbid the thought!"

" No mother,—force shall ne'er be us'd,
" To make thy daughter mine;
" Than break the virtuous parent's heart
" For ever let me pine.

" The welfare of their offspring shou'd
" The parent's heart concern;
" Oh! that the proud and great wou'd stoop
" The fatal truth to learn."

The damsel listen'd at the door
With beating heart I ween,
No hungry wolf that longs for prey,
Ee'r watch'd with ear so keen.

Ah! gold—thou mighty pleader gold,
To whom all nature bows,
Nor vows more stamp the maiden's heart,
Nor Albert more she knows.

" Why shou'dst thou thus debate my heart
" All reason with me pleads;
—" The brother of the Colonel,
" The Black Hussars that leads

" Why would I be the soldier's spouse,
—" A beggar when he dies;
" Perhaps now on Silesia's plains,
" A mangl'd corse he lies!"

Then from her trembling finger quick,
The Soldier's ring she drew;
And from the window, in the stream,
With eager hand she threw.

Into her chamber Fossberg rush'd,
And clasped in his arms;
The lovely maid, whose blushing cheek,
Display'd a thousand charms.

On ev'ry hand—his brilliant rings,
—His star that shone so fine—
Already from her speaking eye,
He might her thoughts divine.

Few words were wanting to the Lord
The willing maid to move,
Who soon with joyful heart consents:
—How eloquent is love!

Into the chariot soon they mount,
Perfum'd with musk so sweet;
And soon the coursers speed their way
That were both snell and sleet.

Along the Elb's green banks they drive,
The forests thro' they wind;
Each thorpe, and sunny smiling cot,
How quick they leave behind.

And MAGDEBURG and HALBERSTADT
They dash and thunder through,
Until the antique Fossberg's spire,
Fair glistens to the view.

In whose dark thickets hies the sprew,
To chirp his tuneless song;
Where sounds the plaintive turtle's note,
And nightingales among.

There soon arriv'd—the holy Priest,
Their hands together locks;
And many a blessing on their heads
The holy man invokes.

Thy vain petitions—artful wretch,
Dost think will ever rise;
Or will not these thy pelfer'd pray'rs,
All-righteous God dispise?

The honey-moon's connubial joys,
In life's sweet summer past,
But little wist the thoughtles pair,
Life's tempest came so fast?

Silesia's Sons no more resist,
—Now conquer'd—left to mourn;
With laurels deckt to MAGDEBURG,
The Black HUSSARS return.

And big was ev'ry Soldier's heart,
His friend or love to meet;
And many a damsel's sparkling eye,
Her brave HUSSAR did greet.

Keen Albert ey'd the gazing croud,
That clad the streets along;
But still the object of his love,
He saw not in the throng.

And when they all had reach'd the camp,
Unto the cot he hied,
But 'ere that he had wander'd far,
A well-known hind he spied.

" God bless thee Albert—welcome home,
" What laurels hast thou won;
" But dost not know, that far from here
" Thy maid, thy Charlotte's gone!"

" What! dost thou rave--or sport with me?
" With haste the truth unfold?
" No Albert,—by the blessed Cross,
—" Most true it is I've told.

" Scarce the third moon it's zenith reach'd,
" When thou the town didst leave,
" 'Ere to the mighty Fossbergs Lord,
" Thy maid her hand did give!"

Astound he stands—of motion reft,
Unseemly and aghast,
So stands the stately forest oak,
Whereon the lightnings dasht.

He struck his forehead with his hand,
Fierce roll'd his piercing eye,
The bloom evanish'd from his cheek,
And sadly did he sigh.

As slowly homeward then he stalks
The well known path along,
So mournful coo'd the turtle dove
The nightsome woods among.

The winsome scenes of former days,
Each glade, and beachen bower,
The flaxen fields in ev'ning's blush,
That smelt so sweet in flower.

Farewell! he cried—once happy scenes,
Nor waken on my mind;
While oft he turns with grief's sad eye,
To view the cot behind.

With downcast heart, where all was mirth,
He passes thro' the town,
While silently the bitter drops
His cheeks did trickle down.

And when her sable curtains night
O'er all the sky had spread,
He mounts his steed, in wrathful mood
To Fossberg forth and sped

And now the plaintive nightingale,
Began her love-sweet song;
And loudly craick'd the noisy rail,
The waving grass among.

Big was his heart—he spur'd his steed
Each willing nerve that strains,
And soon the wealthy Fossberg's door
All unobserv'd he gains

The midnight wine went round with glee
And cheer'd with many a song;
While loud the peals of laughter rung
The galleries along

The Soldier 'lighted from his steed,
His mantle round him flung;
And shrouded in the clead of night,
The massy bell he rung.

And soon the servant tends his call
" What seeks the stranger here?"
" Haste tell thy Lady, news I bring,
" Herself alone must hear."

Down from the board with haste she came
And haughty was her mein;
Undaunted rush'd the Soldier in:
—Affecting was the scene!

She shriek'd aloud, and swoon'd away,
Death seem'd with life to vie;
The servants run—the house alarm,
With terror struck they cry!

Lord Fossberg soon the cause enquir'd,
His rage no limits knew;
—Heated with wine, he forward sprung
His glitt'ring sword and drew.

" What villain art thou, thus array'd,
" That puts my house in strife,
" At solitary midnight hour:
—" What wou'dst thou with my wife!"

" Thy wife,—curst be that day she was,
" Heav'n's vengeance on her head ;
" Base woman, well thy perjur'd soul
" It's awful doom may dread !

" In anguish well may'st gnash thy teeth,
" And tear thy raven hair ;
" For God's unerring justice hence,
—" Curst infidel prepare !"

" Villain forbear !—hence from my door"—
Lord Fossberg loud did cry ;
" Or, by the Saviour of mankind,
" This instant shalt thou die ! "

" I'll leave thy door not ere the truth
" Of all this shall appear ;
" And think not tho' thy birth be high,
" Thy feckless arm I fear."

As quick as thought, the Baron sprung,
His sword with fury bent,
And ere the Soldier was aware
His heart asunder rent !

He backward fell, of life bereft,
Each muscle ceas'd to play;
While from his heart the reeking blood,
In silence sought it's way.

Lord Fossberg call'd his servants round,
For troubl'd was his mind;
With costly gifts their tales forbid,
And secrecy enjoin'd.

"Hence to the cavern bear the corps,
—" And plunge it in the deep;
" Where never sounding line was cast,
" There let the body sleep!"

Into the cavern's awfull throat,
Deep mark'd with many a blast.
Into the yawning deep below,
The body down they cast.

And now deep marks of sullen gloom,
On Fossberg's brow appear;
While Charlotte's heart to peace unknown,
Fell dreams and visions tear!

How transient then is earthly bliss,
—Terrestrial joys how vain;
Be wise ye friends of fortune then,
Your pleasures and restrain.

All on her bed at midnight hour,
As Charlotte weeping lay;
Far from her eye-lids sleep had fled,
And sore she long'd for day.

When lo! so as the clock had chim'd,
A distant sound she heard,
That loudly rung the woods among,
And still the house it near'd.

Inhuman yells and howlings dread,
No earthly sound that knew;
And clanking chains and gingling wheels,
And still more loud they grew.

And erst into the court it came,
It's wheels so heavy rung:
—"It is a carriage, sure"—she thought,
And to the window sprung.

And soon around the house it drove,
With dread and dismal sound,
The massy building with its din,
Shook to the very found.

And lo! a swarthy phæton soon,
Presents itself to view,
Three sable brutes the team compose,
No earthly form that knew.

More grim than death,—the first bestrode
A shapeless monster wild;
No head it had—but in its hand
A swinging whip it held!

And in the phæton frowning stood,
Convolv'd in rolling smoke;
A sable form, whose thund'ring voice
The awful silence broke:—

"I come thy proffer'd husband's sp'rit
"Thy sentence to declare,
"For God's all-righteous judgement, haste
"Thy guilty soul prepare.

" Make no delay—thy time is short—
" All earthly cares forsake,
" For soon unto the judgement seat
" Thy soul its flight must take!"

He wav'd his hand—his swinging whip,
The shapeless monster bent;
And one by one, the swarthy teem
Unpitied blows he lent.

Tremendous yells, unearthly howls,
Loud vent the sable crew;
'Mid rolling smoke and flashing flame
The awful phæton flew!

And ring and ring, it brush'd away—
The gate in twain it dash'd;
And loud and shrill, rung ev'ry hill,
As keen the monster lash'd.

Away, away, like distant war,
The dreadful phæton hurls,
While on its wings, the midnight breeze,
The awful accents whirls.

And now convuls'd in ev'ry limb,
And bath'd in oozing sweat,
The faithless Charlotte sought her couch,
And sore her heart did beat.

Ah! little knows the virtuous heart,
The awful, dreadful knell
Of waken'd conscience,—only thee
Rude murder's heart can tell.

With many a deep felt pang she wept,
And thought upon her ways;
To God above her impious hands
She dreaded still to raise.

No peace her troubled heart could find;
She sinks in fell despair:
—To madness drove—she shrieks about,
In anguish tears her hair.

And deeply did Lord Fossberg feel,
The troubles of his wife;
His heart with inward pain was wrung,
And irksome was his life.

Dark was the night, and loud the storm
That howl'd the woods among;
Tremendous was the thunder's voice,
That roll'd the sky along.

When from the window Charlotte leap'd,
Her steps no eye does greet;
Thro' park and pool, o'er steep and stone,
She flies with naked feet;

And to the sounding cavern hoar,
Thro' woods and wilds she creeps;
Where sad the spirit of the blast,
In mournful accent weeps,

Of human reason all bereft,
Unconscious inward flies;
The awful chasm—yawning deep,
With fearless heart she eyes.

A while she tore her scatter'd locks,
—A while she stood to weep;
Then beat her breast with frantic rage,
And plung'd her in the deep.

And lo! her fleeting soul away,
The phæton soon does bear;
And fierce as hell, the monsters yell,
Along the midnight air.

While slowly beat the drum of death,
The awful trumpet blew;
The monster lash'd, the phæton crash'd,
The judgement seat in view!

And at the midnight's gloomy hour,
When mortals sink in sleep,
The dreadful phæton oft is seen
To issue from the deep.

'Mid flash and flame and rolling smoke,
The Elb it glides along;
And hiss and hiss its fiery wheels,
The dashing waves among.

Round Fossberg's now deserted hall
It drives with thund'ring din;
Two human forms the peasants saw,
The phæton ride within.

No more the once proud Fossberg's Lord
The social hour partakes;
A hermit in retirement, he
Society forsakes.

No more into his once proud hall,
The midnight taper shines;
Up whose huge walls,in ruins left,
The mantling ivy twines.

But there the owl and raven haunt,
To build their bloody nest;
No harmless stork is ever seen
Upon it's walls to rest.

Oh! learn then, not to set thy heart
On what it ought to hate;
And not thy fatal error see,
Like Charlotte when too late.

Finis.